

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06  
COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 /084 W  
----- 092345 /50 45

R 221252Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8984  
INFO AMCONSUL EDINBURGH  
AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, UK  
SUBJECT: PRENTICE RESIGNS FROM CABINET

1. REG PRENTICE HAS FINALLY RESIGNED FROM THE CABINET. AFTER MANY MONTHS OF PROGRESSIVE ALIENATION FROM THIS LABOR GOVERNMENT, PRENTICE HAS NOW TAKEN A FIRM STEP DOWN A ROAD MANY BELIEVE WILL EVENTUALLY LEAD HIM OUT OF THE LABOR PARTY ALTOGETHER. HE SEIZED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF LAST WEEK'S BUDGET CUTS AS THE ISSUE ON WHICH TO RESIGN BUT IF IT HAD NOT BEEN THIS ISSUE, IT WOULD SOONER OR LATER HAVE BEEN ANOTHER. (HE OBJECTED TO THE CUTS IN DEFENSE, OVERSEAS AID, AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, BELIEVING THAT THE MORE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS OF INSURANCE BENEFITS, PRESCRIPTION CHARGES, AND PENSIONS SHOULD HAVE BEEN TACKLED INSTEAD.)

2. PRENTICE HAS LONG HAD TROUBLES WITH HIS OWN CONSTITUENCY PARTY ORGANIZATION. LEFT-WINGERS INFILTRATED AND CAPTURED THE MACHINERY AND THEN DUMPED HIM AS A CANDIDATE. HIS EFFORTS TO WIN BACK THE PARTY  
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MACHINERY AND GET THE DECISION REVERSED HAVE BEEN HAMFISTED IN THE EXTREME AND HIS BLUNT, UNCOMPROMISING PUBLIC STATEMENTS ATTACKING THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRADE UNIONS HAVE MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR EVEN HIS FRIENDS TO HELP HIM.

3. IN CABINET TOO HE HAS PROVED TO BE AN AWKWARD COLLEAGUE. BUT FOR THE STRONG PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF ROY JENKINS ON HIS BEHALF, PRENTICE WOULD SOMETIME SINCE HAVE BEEN DROPPED. WITH HIS PATRON NOW OFF TO BRUSSELS, PRENTICE MAY WELL HAVE DECIDED TO JUMP BEFORE BEING PUSHED.

4. PRENTICE WILL BE SUCCEEDED AS MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT BY HIS DEPUTY, FRANK JUDD, BUT JUDD WILL NOT ENTER THE CABINET. ITS MEMBERSHIP HAS THUS BEEN REDUCED TO 23.

5. ALTHOUGH ANY CABINET RESIGNATION MUST BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THIS ONE IS LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL. FAR MORE SERIOUS WOULD IT BE IF PRENTICE WERE TO QUIT THE PARTY, RESIGN HIS SEAT, FORCE A BY-ELECTION, AND STAND AS AN INDEPENDENT. FOR THE NONCE, HOWEVER, HE SIMPLY GOES TO THE BACK BENCHES WHERE HE JOINS THE GROWING RANKS OF DISAFFECTED LABORITES, DISAFFECTED TORIES, AND LIBERALS WHO ARE CALLING FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY.

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